



State of Wisconsin  
Department of Public Instruction  
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

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State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster

Highlights from State of Education Address

*Thursday, September 18, 2008 — State Capitol Rotunda*

MADISON—Today, State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster delivered her 2008 State of Education address. Some highlights from the address follow.

Public education in Wisconsin has been stretched to the limit. Wisconsin's dedicated educators have been resilient in balancing the needs of today with tomorrow's expectations. Unless we reinvest in our PK-12 education system and make our students world ready, Wisconsin will lose our competitive edge in the 21st century.

Today, I am proposing a state education budget that significantly reinvests in our PK-12 system. It is a budget that commits to two-thirds state funding, brings local property taxpayer relief, and prioritizes early childhood education, small class sizes, global literacy, and teacher recruitment and compensation.

It is a budget that addresses increasing child poverty, the rising cost of transportation, increasing populations of English-language learners, the high costs associated with special education, and increases support for our public libraries and our smaller, rural school districts. And, a budget that, for the first time in 15 years, provides real revenue limit relief for all our schools.

Quality education begins in early childhood and includes: rigorous and relevant academic standards aligned with postsecondary and workforce expectations; world languages starting in elementary school; respect for heritage and tribal languages; a strong emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM); the arts, gifted and talented, career and technical and international education; and meaningful connections between education and the working world, including service learning, youth apprenticeship, and guidance for students as they prepare career pathways.

Although our students have been among the most successful in the nation for the past century and our state is a leader in high school graduation rates, that's still not enough when one out of every 10 Wisconsin high school students fails to graduate and achievement gaps persist. We must bring people together around our shared value and responsibility to raise student achievement and close the achievement gap between economically disadvantaged students, students of color, and their peers. In this 21st Century, we must graduate every child world ready, Wisconsin.

We must create a collaborative agenda that supports our growing numbers of children in poverty and children of color in Wisconsin. We must lift up all the children of this generation – not divide them against each other. Then – and only then – will we truly realize the potential of a public education system that can preserve our American democracy, secure economic prosperity, and ensure justice and compassion in civic life. That is our New Wisconsin Promise.

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